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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8437  
RUCNFB/FBI WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0344  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2020  
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 0745  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0156

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 000255

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR THE SECRETARY FROM THE AMBASSADOR  
FBI FOR THE DIRECTOR FROM THE AMBASSADOR  
PACOM FOR THE COMMANDER FROM THE AMBASSADOR  
DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR D, P, SCA, AND S/CT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/11/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [KDEM](#) [EAID](#) [MARR](#) [PHUM](#)  
BG  
SUBJECT: PENNY WISE, POUND FOOLISH: BANGLADESH TEETERING ON  
BRINK

REF: DHAKA 218

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JAMES F. MORIARTY. REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

SUMMARY  
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11. (C) The February 25 - 26 Bangladesh Rifles mutiny has shaken the country's two month-old experiment in democracy to its core. The level of brutality and the loss of over fifty senior army officers have left important constituencies openly questioning the future of democratic governance in this Muslim-majority country of 150 million people located at the crossroads of South and Southeast Asia. A key to stabilizing the situation at this crucial time is ensuring there is a credible investigation into the mutiny which will allow the country to heal and move forward. The Government of Bangladesh lacks both the capability and the credibility to conduct such an investigation completely on its own. The USG needs to help, if we expect to protect important equities here, such as consolidating Bangladesh's democracy and continuing cooperation against terrorism.

Request for Assistance on Hold in Washington  
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12. (C) Bangladesh is not capable of conducting a thorough and credible investigation without outside assistance. For this reason, the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister almost immediately sought U.S. and U.K. assistance with the investigation (reftel). The Prime Minister is sure to ask for an update when I meet with her tomorrow, March 12. Two agents from the FBI office in New Delhi arrived March 8 to conduct an assessment of what Bangladesh needs to successfully conclude a credible investigation. This was a welcome first step. Their recommendations have been passed to FBI Headquarters and the two agents are scheduled to depart March 12. Follow up is on hold due to the inability of FBI and other USG agencies to identify the resources needed to implement these recommendations. (Note: The British plan to provide some assistance. However, given the death penalty

in Bangladesh, HMG could not provide any assistance that could result in the imposition of capital punishment against guilty parties.)

#### Important U.S. Equities in Bangladesh

13. (C) The United States provides over \$150 million in development assistance to Bangladesh each year. In addition, the Department of Defense carries out an active engagement program that includes exercises, subject matter exchanges, and millions of dollars in humanitarian assistance. We have invested over \$5 billion in aid to Bangladesh since its independence in 1971. Moreover, various attacks in India since the summer of 2007 have shown Bangladesh to be an important transit and logistical point for some of the most dangerous transnational terrorist groups. Particularly since the November terrorist attack in Mumbai, the USG has received good cooperation from the Government of Bangladesh in addressing this terrorist threat. Nonetheless, at this critical moment in Bangladesh's history, we appear prepared to risk all that we have accomplished for the lack of a relatively small investment needed to bring a small team of U.S. investigators to assist their local law enforcement counterparts.

#### Who is Going to Pick up the Tab?

14. (C) Reportedly, some in the USG have shied away from

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involvement since they do not see any direct U.S. interests at stake. I have a hard time understanding that logic, since I see this crisis affecting virtually all that we are trying to accomplish in Bangladesh -- from helping to improve democratic governance, to promoting development, to denying space to terrorists. This crisis has only underscored the importance of U.S. engagement and the need for a "whole of government" approach to advancing our interests. Yet, ironically, at a time of great need, USG agencies appear unable to look beyond narrow parochial interests. Instead, each looks for some other agency to pick up the tab.

#### Palpable Risks from Not Helping Bangladesh, Now

15. (C) There simply has to be a way we can find the money and experts needed to help avert a much greater crisis in Bangladesh. A botched investigation, with results questioned by all, would lead to a full-blown crisis of governance here and could result in extra-constitutional action by disgruntled political groups, terrorist organizations, or the Army. Moreover, if we fail to help the investigation, the U.S. will lose credibility with Bangladesh's government and people. This will hamper our ability to convince Bangladesh to work with us on issues of concern to the USG. Our friends will feel abandoned and our adversaries, emboldened. While we have as yet no evidence that a local or transnational terrorist group was behind this atrocity, we can be certain that there will be no meaningful CT cooperation from our Bangladeshi counterparts until they have put this crisis behind them. There is also a risk that the investigation could deteriorate into a witch hunt, compromising our ability to cooperate with law enforcement and military counterparts in the future.

#### Comment/Action Request

16. (C) For Bangladeshis, the mutiny at the Bangladesh Rifles Headquarters was as shattering an experience as 9/11 was for Americans, but with one important difference: The mutiny has not only left Bangladeshis confused, afraid, and angry, it has also left them doubting whether their duly-elected government will continue to exist in the coming months. The

USG should do all we can to eliminate that doubt. I urge that senior officials from the Departments of State, Justice, and Defense and FBI work together to find a way to fund investigative resources to help Bangladesh in its time of need. If we fail to do so, I fear we will come to regret it in the coming months.

MORIARTY